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From: CN=Stephanie Flaharty/OU=DC/O=USEPA/C=US

Sent: Fri 10/12/2012 11:15:19 AM

Subject: BNA: EPA Releases New Well Monitoring Data On Groundwater Pollution at Wyoming Site
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 Releases New Well Monitoring Data On Groundwater Pollution at Wyoming Site

Drilling: EPA Releases New Well Monitoring Data On Groundwater Pollution at Wyoming Site
 By Tripp Baltz

DENVER—The Environmental Protection Agency released new monitoring data Oct. 10 on groundwater contamination in a natural gas field near Pavillion, Wyo., which the agency had previously linked to hydraulic fracturing.

EPA resampled and reanalyzed its two deep monitoring wells in conjunction with the U.S. Geological Survey. The USGS had conducted its own sampling on one of the wells, saying in two reports released Sept. 26 it was unable to sample the other well because of low water flow (187 DEN A-10, 09/27/12). In issuing its reports relating to groundwater quality and well yield data at Pavillion, USGS did not draw any conclusions about the sources of contamination in the aquifer. When EPA released its December field report on Pavillion, the agency said the groundwater contamination was “likely associated with gas production practices, including hydraulic fracturing” (237 DEN A-15, 12/9/11).

EPA's new data and the USGS data are "generally consistent" with the monitoring data included in EPA's draft report on Pavillion, EPA spokeswoman Alisha Johnson told BNA.

Provided to Working Group

EPA released its "Phase V" resampled and reanalyzed data at a meeting of the Pavillion Working Group in Riverton, Wyo., which includes representatives from EPA, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, and tribal and community groups.

EPA also collected samples from five domestic water wells adjacent to the deep monitoring wells and a municipal well and included analysis from those samples in its Phase V report.

At the meeting, EPA announced a three-month extension of the public comment period for its draft field report on Pavillion to Jan. 15 to "give stakeholders sufficient time to consider all data" related to its groundwater investigation.

The new EPA data, along with EPA's draft report and the USGS data, will be submitted to an independent peer-review panel after the public comment period ends, Johnson said.

Minor Errors in Original Report

At the working group meeting, EPA groundwater researcher Dominic DiGiulio corrected some errors in the agency's December report. The agency's second well, MW02, was erroneously logged as having a depth of 980 feet and being made of stainless steel. In actuality, the well is 989 feet deep, and its casing is made from "thread and couple" steel, DiGiulio said.

Doug Hock, spokesman for Encana, the energy company that previously operated in the Pavillion gas field, told BNA that EPA has been "less than transparent with numerous issues that have been raised about the wells." He said the recent report, in addition to DiGiulio's comments, marked "the first time they have admitted some of the mistakes with MW02."

"What else don't we know?" Hock said, adding that Encana continues to wait for EPA to respond to various Freedom of Information Act requests it has made with respect to data from the agency's Pavillion investigation.

MW02 was the well USGS said it could not sample because of low water yield. DiGiulio explained EPA continues to maintain low yield is not a reason to preclude the sampling from MW02, and that the data from the well can be used.

Different Methods

In its Oct. 10 report, EPA said it used different methods of analysis than those used by USGS. For example, in the analysis of low-yield wells, it used a new, low-level glycol method that it has developed and has had verified in multiple EPA laboratories. It said it plans to submit its new method for publication in the peer-reviewed literature.

USGS, by contrast, used a commercial laboratory for glycol analysis. "We chose not to sample MW02," Dave Ozman, a USGS spokesman, told BNA Oct. 11. "We were unable to use traditional sampling methods."

He said the low-level methods that could have been used were more extensive, would have taken additional time and money, and would have been "beyond the scope" of its agreement with Wyoming to sample the Pavillion well data.

For More Information

EPA's website on Pavillion, Wyo., which includes a link to the report released Oct. 10, is

<http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/wy/pavillion/phase5.html>.

The notice announcing EPA's extension of the public comment period for the Pavillion Draft Field Report is available at <http://op.bna.com/env.nsf/r?Open=smiy-8yyny5>.